

Police brutality claims 50% above normal

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Claims of police brutality, especially alleged abuse of batons, have risen sharply in Oakland after the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles nearly four months ago, according to the city's police watchdog agency.

The most serious recent claim alleges that a 21-year-old man, whom police suspected of selling drugs, was struck more than 10 times by three officers who surrounded him on a West Oakland street.

The blows, including hits to the man's head, were serious enough to send the victim, Michael Moseley, to the hospital, said a witness so disturbed by the incident that he filed a complaint of his own.

Since the videotaped March 3 incident in a Los Angeles suburb focused national attention on police abuses, brutality claims against Oakland police are running 50 percent above normal, according to the Oakland Citizen's Complaint Board.

The agency, which investigates brutality claims separately from the police

Incidents rise after videotaped beating in L.A.

department has received eight complaints a month since King was struck five dozen times by officers wielding batons, records show.

Before the Los Angeles case, citizens filed about five claims a month alleging abuses by Oakland police.

Larry Carroll, senior investigative officer for the agency, said the increase can be explained by a rise in complaints of police misuse of their nightsticks.

Carroll said many baton incidents currently under review, including the alleged attack on Moseley, occurred before the Los Angeles case. But he speculated that the King beating encouraged people to contest officers' use of force.

Under police department policy, batons are to be used by officers only as a last resort to control the most violent suspects.

Carroll said that if a half-dozen pending claims of baton abuse are sus-

tained, the watchdog group could recommend reforms in police procedures.

"There may be a need for more (officer) training in how to control suspects without having to use batons," Carroll said.

Oakland Police Chief George Hart was unavailable for comment on the growing number of claims alleging misuse of nightsticks.

Hart, in response to the King beating, previously ordered his department to undergo a month of retraining on the use of force.

The latest Oakland brutality claim alleges that police kicked and struck three men, including the son of longtime civic activist and failed mayoral candidate Dezie Woods-Jones, outside a night club near Jack London Square two weeks ago.

But the Moseley beating appears to be more serious, according to a witness's statement to the police watchdog

agency.

The witness, Leonard Williams, said he was driving his car on Market Street in the dead of night last October 29 when he noticed three officers chasing Moseley on foot.

After parking his car and running to get a closer look at the incident, Williams saw the officers "swinging their batons aggressively" at Moseley, who "was unsuccessfully trying to avoid being struck by dancing in circles," according to the statement.

The officers "continued to strike the suspect repeatedly" as he lay on the ground, the statement continues. Moseley fell to the street "in a pool of blood" until another officer ordered the attack to stop, Williams claims.

Moseley, who filed a claim against the city this month, was not available for comment on the incident.

The police account of the episode differs significantly from Moseley's and Williams' versions of the story.

According to police reports, Moseley was stopped by police who suspected

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him of drug dealing. According to police reports, Moseley tried to run from officers and began swinging his arms and kicking at them when they caught up with him.

The officers said they needed to use nightsticks to contain Moseley, who was arrested for as-

sault and resisting arrest.

An internal police department review of the case has not been completed, police said.

Williams, a 37-year-old heating contractor, said he stepped forward to complain because he felt it was his duty.

"I wanted to correct something I felt was wrong," he said.